

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application. Please cancel claims 1-15 without prejudice.

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. – 15. (Canceled)

16. (Previously Presented) A method of automatically finding one or more answers to a natural language question in a computer stored natural language text database, wherein said natural language text database has been analyzed with respect to clause boundaries, constituents, syntactic functions of the constituents, word tokens of the constituents, and lemmas of the word tokens, and wherein said natural language question comprises a question clause having an interrogative pronoun, comprising the steps of:

analyzing a computer readable representation of said question clause with respect to constituents, syntactic functions of the constituents, word tokens of the constituents, and lemmas of the word tokens;

identifying the interrogative pronoun in said computer readable representation of said question clause;

determining a syntactic function of interest based on the analyzing step and the identified interrogative pronoun;

identifying a constituent having the determined syntactic function in the question clause;

selecting a word token being a lexical head of the identified constituent in the question clause;

defining a set of conditions comprising a condition stipulating that, for a clause in said natural language text database to constitute an answer to said question clause, the clause comprises a word token having the same lemma as the selected word token of the question clause and being comprised in a constituent having the same syntactic function as the identified constituent of said question clause;

identifying clauses in said natural language text database that satisfy said conditions; and

returning answers to said question clause by means of the identified clauses that satisfy said conditions.

17. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 16, further comprising the step of:

determining a syntactic function of a queried constituent based on the analyzing step and the identified interrogative pronoun,

wherein said set of conditions comprises a further condition stipulating that, for a clause in said natural language text database to constitute an answer to said question clause, the clause comprises a constituent having the same syntactic function as the queried constituent.

18. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 16, wherein the identified constituent of the question clause has the syntactic function main verb, the selected word token is a lexical head of the constituent having the syntactic function

main verb of the question clause, and said set of conditions in the defining step comprises:

a verb condition stipulating that, for a clause to constitute an answer to said question clause, the clause comprises a word token being a lexical head of a constituent having the syntactic function main verb, and

having the same lemma as the lexical head of the constituent having the syntactic function of main verb of said question clause.

19. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 16, wherein the identified constituent of the question clause has the syntactic function subject, the selected word token is a lexical head of the constituent having the syntactic function subject of the question clause, and said set of conditions in the defining step comprises:

a subject condition stipulating that, for a clause to constitute an answer to said question clause, the clause comprises a word token being a lexical head of a constituent having the syntactic function subject, and having the same lemma as the lexical head of the constituent having the syntactic function of subject of said question clause.

20. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 16, wherein the identified constituent of the question clause has the syntactic function object, the selected word token is a lexical head of the constituent having the syntactic function object of the question clause, and said set of conditions in the defining step comprises:

an object condition stipulating that, for a clause to constitute an answer to said question clause, the clause comprises a word token being a lexical head of a constituent having the syntactic function object, and having the same lemma as the lexical head of the constituent having the syntactic function of object of said question clause.